

# A critique of Putnam's *Making Democracy Work*

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Intro to Comparative Politics, Fall 2011

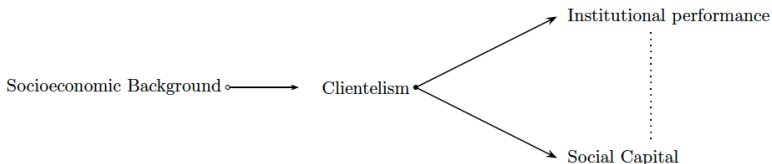
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# Main weaknesses of Putnam's work

- 1 The link between social capital and institutional performance is not well developed in Putnam's account.
- 2 Putnam argues that a divergent path between North and South began 800 years ago and still is present today. Why this historical continuity?
- 3 Putnam's theory does bend itself well in terms of policy recommendations. How can we increase the quality of democracy?

# Is civic culture the cause of institutional performance?

- **Alternative explanation:** Clientelism explains both civic culture and institutional performance.
- Therefore, the relationship between civic culture and institutional performance is *spurious*.

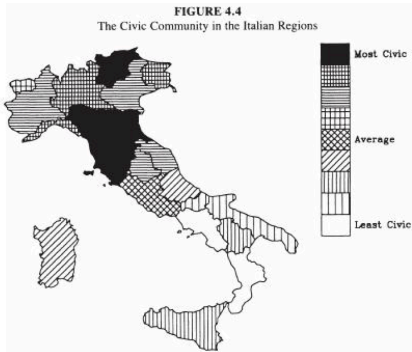


# What is clientelism?

## What is **clientelism**?

- 1 Type of strategy followed by a political entrepreneur who engages in a *quid pro quo* **exchange** of targeted material benefits to voters for political support.
- 2 **Vertical** type of **relationship**, not based on programmatic appeals
- 3 Clientelism is in close relationship with racketeering and **organized-crime**. Indeed in Italy they go together empirically

# Civic culture and organized crime in Italian regions



# The determinants of clientelism

- **Poverty**. The poor are “cheaper” to buy.
- Poor people are more *risk averse*: they do not want to leave the clientelist relationship in exchange for better future policies.
- Income **inequality** favors clientelism.
- The rural economic structure of Southern Italy (where peasants were not property owners) favored the emergence of patron-client relationships.

# Clientelism and civic culture

- Clientelism is defined by a **vertical exchange** (in which there is trust and cooperation but in a vertical sense)
- Horizontal associations are discouraged by patrons because they would increase the relative power of clients
- Historical example: in 1945-1955, several instances of land occupation in Sicily, which is an example of horizontal collective action, heavily suppressed with violence by political authorities supported by Cosa Nostra.

# Sicily, 1945-55



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# Clientelism and institutional performance

- Clientelism discourages the provision of **public goods and public investment** and favors targeted transfers instead.
- Low provision of public goods also discourages the development of the private sector.
- The reason is that public goods provision make it more costly for the patron to engage in clientelistic exchanges. In part because clients now have more outside options.

# The survival of clientelistic practices over time

- Clientelism is an equilibrium strategy because patrons do not have incentives to increase welfare among citizens because that would undermine their access to cheap political support.
- Collective action problem for voters: leaving the “protection” of the patron, individually, incurs in costs and does not solve the problem.
- What is not so well known is how to escape this equilibrium:
  - Wantchekon argues that electoral campaigns based on programmatic appeals can actually provide better results. But, Why are these not implemented then?